

1 CJTF Commander Lt. Gen. MacFarland gives final briefing from Iraq. Commander of the CJTF-OIR Lt. Gen. Sean MacFarland gave his final briefing on August 10 before the end of his assignment in Iraq. Gen. MacFarland will hand the position over to Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend in the next two weeks. Gen. MacFarland discussed operations in northern Iraq and preparations to retake Mosul, citing the increased pace of operations as “not a bad problem to have.” However, he did not give a timeline for operations to retake the city itself. Gen. MacFarland likewise stated that Popular Mobilization participation in Mosul operations was the decision of the Iraqi Government, but added that “political groundwork” would be needed to ensure militia presence is “acceptable” to Ninewa residents.

10 U.S. and Iraqi Kurdish raid kills senior ISIS leader in western Anbar. The Kurdistan Regional Security Council stated that Kurdish counterterrorism forces and U.S. Special Forces conducted a raid in the vicinity of al-Qa'im, western Anbar, on August 11, killing senior ISIS leader Sami Jassim Muhammad al-Juburi, who was in charge of ISIS's natural resources.

9 Tribal fighters threaten to withdraw from Syrian-Iraqi border crossing if ISF does not send reinforcements. Commanders of the “Desert Falcons” and “Western Falcons,” two units of Anbar Sunni tribal fighters, stated on August 10 that they would withdraw from the Waleed border crossing on the southern Syrian-Iraqi border within 24 hours if the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) did not send reinforcements. The forces captured the border crossing on August 3, and ISIS attacked the border crossing on August 9 from the Syrian side.

8 Iraq reopens border with Saudi Arabia before Hajj season. The Anbar deputy governor announced on August 15 that the Anbar Provincial Government in cooperation with the Iraqi Border Guards reopened the Ar Ar border crossing with Saudi Arabia in preparation for the Hajj, starting on September 9. The border has been closed since the end of last year's pilgrimage.

7 ISIS detonates SVBIED in Muthanna Province. ISIS detonated an SVBIED at a checkpoint near al-Mumalha, southwest of Samawah, the provincial capital of Muthanna on August 11, killing two policemen and injuring three others. The Muthanna Police Chief stated that the SVBIED came from Anbar desert and carried at least one attacker wearing an SVEST who intended to attack Samawah. ISIS claimed the attack.

2 ISF, Peshmerga seize terrain around Qayyarah and Guwer, respectively. Units from the Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) and 37th Brigade of the 9th Iraqi Army (IA) Armored Division recaptured several villages east of Qayyarah airbase and south of Qayyarah on August 12 and 13. Meanwhile, Peshmerga forces recaptured upwards of 12 villages on the Guwer-Khazar axis, southeast of Mosul, on August 14 with Coalition air support.

3 ISF, Popular Mobilization begin clearing operations in northern Diyala Province. The Iraqi Security Forces under Samarra and Dijla Operations Commands in cooperation with the Popular Mobilization and Iraqi air support launched clearing operations on August 9 to eliminate ISIS presence in Wadi Udham and Mtaibijah in northern Diyala Province. Joint forces recaptured Mtaibijah on August 10.

4 U.S. Presidential envoy meets with political and security leaders regarding Mosul. U.S. Special Presidential Envoy Brett McGurk arrived in Baghdad and met with several political and security leaders regarding operations in Mosul, including PM Haidar al-Abadi and Defense Minister Khalid al-Obeidi. The conversation touched on Popular Mobilization participation in Mosul, with Sunni Mutaahidun leader Osama al-Nujaifi rejecting any militia presence in the area, while Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) leader Ammar al-Hakim called for the “concerted efforts of all” to defeat ISIS in Mosul. McGurk travelled to Arbil and met with Kurdistan Regional President Masoud Barzani on August 13.

5 CoR approves five new ministers in partial Cabinet reshuffle. The Council of Representatives (CoR) voted in five new ministers to fill vacant positions in the Cabinet. The CoR approved nominees for the Ministries of Oil, Transportation, Higher Education, Water, and Housing/Construction, but rejected the nominee for the Ministry of Trade. Five out of six of the ministers nominated were present on PM Abadi's April 12 nomination list, and all are largely technocratic appointees. The Ministers of Water and Higher Education had previously been voted in on April 26, but lost the position when the Federal Court invalidated the April 26 CoR session.

6 At least one suicide attack at checkpoints south of Baghdad. A Ministry of Interior (MOI) source stated that a Suicide Vehicle-Borne IED (SVBIED) detonated late on August 9 at a checkpoint in Arab Jabour, south of Baghdad, killing three people and injuring eight others. The MOI also reported that a Suicide Vest (SVEST) detonated at a checkpoint in Latifiyah, south of Baghdad, on August 10, killing three and injuring 11 people. However the 17th IA Division and local officials denied the reports. ISIS has not claimed either attack.



- Major Cities
- ISF
- Iraqi Shi'a Militias
- ✈ Airstrikes
- Peshmerga
- ISIS
- 🚗 SVBIED
- 🚩 Coalition
- Anti-ISIS Iraqi Sunni Tribes
- ☄ Raid
- 👤 Demonstration

By Emily Anagnostos and the ISW Iraq Team
©2016 by the Institute for the Study of War

Outgoing Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) Commander Lt. Gen. Sean MacFarland gave his final briefing on August 10 where he discussed the pace of operations to retake Mosul. Gen. MacFarland remarked that the fast pace of operations to retake Mosul “is not a bad problem to have,” downplaying humanitarian concerns that the Iraqi Government will be ill-prepared to handle the wave of refugees from Mosul, which is estimated to have nearly one million still residing in the city. An accelerated timeline for Mosul may also limit how many forces are prepared for operations to retake and hold the city, as Gen. MacFarland stated that the holding force alone would require “thousands” of police forces, but that only a portion had been generated so far. The quickened timeline is likely a result of political pressure on both the U.S. Government, in the wake of a presidential election, and the Iraqi Government, as Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi's position remains tenuous. The pace may also be an effort to preclude Popular Mobilization participation in operations in northern Iraq and particularly in Mosul. The militias may perceive stalled operations as invitation to lend support, despite Coalition, Kurdish, and Ninewa officials' objections to their presence. U.S. Presidential Envoy Brett McGurk met with senior security and political leaders in Baghdad and Arbil from August 11 to 13 to touch on force composition in Mosul, as the Coalition will continue to try and set the terms of militia participation in Ninewa as the operation for Mosul nears.

PM Abadi improved his credibility in the Iraqi Government when the Council of Representatives (CoR) approved five ministers, including for the coveted position of Oil Minister, on August 15 in a partial Cabinet reshuffle. The ministers are career technocrats, and the extent of their political loyalties remains unknown. The ease in which the ministers were approved suggests that PM Abadi had secured the support of political parties prior to the CoR session, in comparison with the massive blow-back in April when he attempted to pass a similar roster of ministers. It is unclear, however, what deals PM Abadi made to secure these reforms. Former PM Nouri al-Maliki and the Reform Front did not protest the reshuffle, even though he had the support base within the CoR to undermine the vote. Maliki may be focused on guaranteeing support within the CoR to dismiss Defense Minister Khalid al-Obeidi rather than distancing possible allies by frustrating attempts for reforms. Obeidi, whom Maliki unsuccessfully tried to dismiss in April 2015, may face a vote of no-confidence on August 23.